

ESSAY REVIEW

Extreme Phenomena and Human Capacity

The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism by Herbert Thurston, edited by J. H. Crehan. London: Burns Oates, 1952. 419 pp. ASIN B0000CI8RW.

William James once remarked that the best way to understand the nature of a psychological phenomenon is to focus on its most extreme manifestations. Attention on the bland and the commonplace won't get us very far. James was writing about religion when he said this, explaining why he planned to discuss saints and mystics in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and not the stale and unprofitable institutional features of religious belief. By analogy, I want to focus on some extreme manifestations of paranormality. The chapters in *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*, first published in 1952, were written by the Jesuit scholar Herbert Thurston, and focused on phenomena related to mystical experience: phenomena, often extravagant and outrageous, but well-attested and critically examined by Thurston. Thurston professes to offer no explanation of the phenomena, only to sift good from bad evidence. So we are led back to the people James said should most concern us in religious studies: the saints and mystics who apparently are also the agents of big paranormal physical effects.

Before we review these effects, and consider what they might imply for human capacity in general, and, incidentally, for parapsychology, we should say something about Thurston's sources and his critical methods. This is important because apart from the general animus toward "paranormal" phenomena from many otherwise intelligent scholars, such phenomena, when linked to "religious" sources, are additionally likely to become suspect and aggravate irrational resistance. The present reviewer has no apologetic agenda, but is curious about the phenomena for what they may imply about the scope of human capacity.

The editor of this volume, J. H. Crehan, says in the Preface that Thurston's chapters were culled from publications first appearing between 1919 and 1938 in *The Month*, *The Catholic Medical Guardian*, and *Studies*. Closely related to the material in the present book are two other books by Thurston,¹ whose content we will try to ignore. A glance through the pages of our review book will show the variety of sources the author relied upon: historical documents, the *Acta Sanctorum* of the scholarly Bollandists (reference for readers), the biographies of saints, assessments of medical authorities, depositions of

eyewitness evidence given under oath from the beatification and canonization processes, and written sanctions and animadversions of the Promoter of the Faith (also known as the Devil's Advocate). If evidence of this type be suspect or deemed inferior, then the same must be true for the whole of historical study, for legal or medical adjudications, and for the business of everyday life whenever doubts and questions arise as they constantly do, and we are forced to make an inference to the best explanation, based on the available evidence. Thurston acknowledges that there are grounds for concern with "imperfectly proved miracles," noting that witnesses who depose evidence, however well-meaning about their sworn testimony, may nonetheless be detected "straining toward edification" more than exact truth. Moreover, the processes themselves may be defective, failing to give dates or any indication of the character or reliability of specific witnesses.

The marvelous event deposed to by a single witness in extreme old age who had heard the story in his youth from some third person unnamed, is set down as a fact with the same trustful confidence with which the biographer records the details attested independently by a dozen different contemporaries who had lived in daily intercourse with the Saint and had been the spectator of all his actions. (p. 2)

Thurston is aware of the mixed value of the materials he is working with and throughout his accounts keeps calling attention to weaknesses and whatever else strikes him as questionable. Despite qualifications about the mixed status of the evidence, Thurston took the evidence of psychical research seriously, but seems to rank it as a form of "natural . . . magic," and claims that the evidence he has collected of saintly psi sometimes surpasses in quality that which has been garnered by psychical researchers (p. 2); no doubt there are instances in which a spontaneous case is treated with less acumen or thoroughness than Thurston managed in his best cases. But this seems about all he is justified in claiming.

He also makes an empirical statement he defends but does not emphasize. "Throughout Holy Writ, from the days of Pharaoh to those of Simon Magus, the position seems to be taken up that while true believers do not possess any monopoly of signs and wonders, the mighty works which they perform by the power of the Most High are in every way more stupendous than the prodigies of natural or diabolical magic with which they are placed as it were in competition" (p. 1). It seems from this phrasing that the "natural magic" phenomena (of psychical research) are guilty by association with the "diabolical," and perhaps for that reason alone one must suppose of dubious quality. Thurston takes a politely adversarial stance toward Spiritualism and psychical research, and occasionally takes a mild poke at Frederic Myers, but never really loses

his objectivity or critical imagination, even if it tends (as I think it does) to weaken his own point of view. This objectivity is evident in his treatment of the phenomena of Mollie Fancher, which causes Thurston to hesitate about his conception of the supernatural.

What should we make of the assertion that saintly psi is "in every way more stupendous" than the "natural" psi studied by secular investigators? At first glance, Thurston has a point: The case for saintly levitation (the subject of the first chapter of the book) is indeed "more stupendous" than the case for levitation by "natural magic" of the anomalous upliftings of D. D. Home. Home famously levitated out of a window several stories above ground and then back in another window in the presence of several highly articulate English lords. Thurston draws on a critique of Home's levitation by the skeptical Frank Podmore, who felt that the stagy way the levitation was produced, along with the dim light and heightened expectations of the witnesses, meant the incident could reasonably be explained as some kind of involuntary group hallucination. This is probably psychical research's best levitation case; Thurston's evidence is indeed much more robust; numerous cases (not merely one) of levitations of the human body took place in broad daylight (not in the dim light of a moonlit room); were seen by numerous and various witnesses repeatedly; happened suddenly and unexpectedly (were not part of any staged event); and caused unbearable embarrassment to the saints, who were horrified by all the attention. On the face of it, this is a slam-dunk for Thurston's thesis.

But that thesis may be an artifact of the limited scope of our evidence and of our understanding of the phenomenon. Thurston's "competitors" may not have the levitation cases that he can draw upon, but they do have some, and different forms of, levitational behavior. There is good evidence for table tilting, and for full levitation of objects by mediums such as Eusapia Palladino, as well as reports of poltergeist phenomena that involve various telekinetic (ergo levitational) happenings.² There are the group experiments of Kenneth Batcheldor that reportedly have produced complete levitation of physical objects. Finally, Podmore's critique of the Home case is not definitive. The point: Our data are primitive and incomplete; we know nothing of the extent, which may be considerable, of levitation among Hindu saints and mystics or ecstatic Sufis or in contexts of shamanic ecstasy or diabolical possession (around which swirl tales of levitation).

The concentrated number of ecstasies who have reportedly levitated in Christian Europe, and which seemed to peak during the Baroque period, were the product of a peculiar culture, psychology, physiology, and of a uniquely evolved belief-system, which seems to have elicited that particular form of paranormal manifestation in such abundance. The force, power, or agency that underlies the successful dice-throwing experiments of Rhine, the biasing

of quantum processes with Schmidt machines, the surly and blackly comical shenanigans of poltergeists, and the ecstatic levitations of the saints may well be rooted in some unknown hyper-system of human capacities; we should not be surprised that this feebly understood system takes on a variety of forms, and for all we know will assume new forms in the future we cannot even imagine now. The rare, culture-specific explosion of ecstatic levitations discussed by Thurston deserves our interest and careful study; however astonishing, it does not prove intervention by the "Most High" unless by "Most High" we choose to stipulate a modest hypothesis of a *mind at large*.

One other introductory comment: It should be said that the Catholic Church is not in the business of marvel-mongering, which is why the Devil's Advocate, the trials or *processi*, and indeed other inquisitorial procedures have always played a role in the Church's cautious, bureaucratic procedures for miracle-and-saint ratification. As the most skillful expositors of weaknesses (or outright fraud) of evidence for the paranormal are psychical researchers and parapsychologists, so have church officials and investigators been no less skillful in exposing fraudulent or weak claims to saintly marvels, and Thurston doesn't hesitate to deflate major figures. For example, some later writings on Francis of Assisi talk of his levitations, but Thurston shows there is no evidence for this most popular of Catholic saints being ecstatically uplifted into space. He may have done it, but the evidence isn't there. Thurston tracks the likely reason for the legend arising that Francis did levitate in the ambiguity of a word used to describe his behavior, *suspendebatur*, indicating his entranced state, *not* that he was suspended in space (p. 7). As I will attempt to show, Thurston's scrupulous sense of evidence keeps pushing him toward qualifying one of his basic religious premises.

Now let's turn to what will seem a very strange catalogue of inexplicable physical phenomena. We cannot present much detail, the wealth of eyewitness narratives, or the full historical breadth of cases. At best we can provide a few samples and perhaps some short comments. Let's begin with a remark of Thurston about acquiring good evidence for levitation: i.e. any unexplained uplifting of a human body—usually, in the cases that interest us—of a person in some ecstatic, enraptured state of consciousness. And yet, to acquire evidence for levitation should be a simple matter. One needs technical knowledge to interpret (say) an apparent miraculous (or paranormal) healing; it's different with levitation. Anybody with a functioning sensory system, normal intelligence, and speech capacity can observe and accurately report a person's body rise off the ground, float or fly or remain suspended, whether inches or yards away, or whether for a few seconds or many minutes or hours. Note the circumstances in which saintly levitation occurs: in broad daylight, many times in many places, and suddenly. The phenomena are like seizures, and occur during ecstatic states.

The forms of levitation we are discussing are related to, and in part caused by, a peculiar state of mind. A state of mind can thus directly alter (however transiently) the geometry of space-time, which must be so if we think of gravity in terms of Einstein's general theory of relativity. If certain states of mind can affect (and indeed suspend) a property of physical reality so fundamental as gravity, it says something about the status of mind and consciousness in nature. What it says contradicts mainstream views that reduce mind to a causally vacuous byproduct of brain processes. Levitation implies something fundamental about the power of mind directly to suspend fundamental physical processes.

The levitators are the ecstasies. Consider the case of a Sienese Capuchin nun Passitea who died in 1615. Thurston reminds us that the biographer was an Arabic scholar with a keen sense of evidence who wrote:

According to the violence of the ecstasy she was lifted more or less from the ground. Sister Felice deposed that she had seen her raised three *braccia*. Sister Maria Francesca more than four *braccia* and at the same time she was completely surrounded with an immense effulgence of light. This lasted for two or three hours. On one occasion at Santa Fiori in the house of the Duchess Sforza, when she was present with a crowd of other people, Passitea was surprised by a rapture, under the influence of which she remained raised from the ground at the height of a man. The Duchess, who was a witness of the occurrence, caused an attestation of the fact to be drawn up, which was signed by all present. (p. 29)

As solid eyewitness testimony, we see the phenomenon from the external perspective of a third person. Fortunately, we also have good first-person accounts of what it feels like to be levitated in Chapter XX of Teresa of Avila's autobiography.³ The rapture phase of the ecstatic experience once it commences is irresistible.

... often it comes like a strong, swift impulse before your thought can forewarn you of it or you can do anything to help yourself; you see and feel this cloud, or this powerful eagle, rising and bearing you up with it on its wings. . . . When I tried to resist these raptures, it seemed that I was being lifted up by a force beneath my feet so powerful that I know nothing to which I can compare it, for it came with a much greater vehemence than any other spiritual experience and I felt as if I were being ground to powder. (p. 191)

Although she admits at first feeling fear and trying (without success) to resist these extraordinary feelings, she notes one of the interesting aftereffects: "The favour also leaves a strange detachment," hard to describe except to say that not just her spirit but her body feels "a new estrangement from things of

earth." This in turn results in a kind of distress also hard to describe. It should be noted that Thurston cites independent witnesses who deposed testimony confirming Teresa's strange upliftings. Thurston provides other examples of well-evidenced levitation; the case of Joseph of Copertino (1603–1663) is the strongest for testimony from multiple witnesses, and going on pretty steadily for thirty-five years.⁴

We can conceptually arrange Thurston's phenomena according to the feature of nature that they impinge upon. For example, in levitation gravity is impinged upon; it is bracketed; suspended. Or consider accounts of strange "luminous phenomena"; the target domain now is light, like gravity, a fundamental feature of physical nature. In the chapter dealing with inedia, the impacted domain are the normal mechanisms of nutrition, a basic feature of biological nature. And so on—until we observe the physical mechanisms that normally operate when an organism dies also suspended and impinged upon.

So the chapter on levitation is about *gravity*; in a related way, so is Chapter IV, titled *Telekinesis*. Thurston notes that levitation is a form of telekinesis (or to use the more recent term *psychokinesis*). The general idea is direct mental agency causing physical change outside one's own body. Whereas parapsychology is familiar with dice experiments that illustrate paranormal movements, a different form of telekinesis is discussed in this chapter, "the alleged transference of the Host through the air by some unexplained agency from the altar or the hands of the officiating priest to the lips of the expectant communicant" (p. 141). Thurston begins by quoting a Promoter of the Faith from 1755 (p. 142) to the effect that such telekinetic movements of the Host have no moral significance in themselves, and may be produced by good or bad individuals (presumably diabolically influenced). Thurston then details the cases of several nuns and pseudo-mystics who were caught faking these flights of the Host. The faked performances are motivated by the fact that genuine cases were sufficiently familiar to serve as convincing indicators of sanctity. It would make no sense to fake a phenomenon that nobody believed was authentic; nobody would forge a check unless there were checks that people accepted and cashed as genuine.

There is time for one example of the telekinetic Host. The agent is the mystic Catherine of Genoa; the witness, a priest, her confessor and biographer, Raymond of Capua. As we keep finding, the alleged telekinetic events with the Host occur when the communicant is *ecstatic*—in exit from their normal minds. Raymond tells of a time when he and Catherine arrived in Siena fatigued from a long journey and Catherine had the intense desire to receive Communion; so the priest donned his vestments and consecrated the Host, which lay on the corporal before him. He glanced at Catherine whose face was radiant with expectation. Remarking to himself with pious wonder on this sight, he wrote later (as part of an elaborately conscientious report): "I know and am certain

that I saw the Sacred Host move of Itself without the intervention of anyone and come towards me" (p. 146). Presumably, this was movement meant to hasten Catherine's Communion.

Others witnessed the phenomenon. As reported in Mother Francis Raphael's *Life of St. Catherine*,

Fr. Bartholomew Dominic tells us in his deposition that he frequently gave her Holy Communion, and that often at the moment of doing so he felt the Sacred Host agitated, as it were, in his fingers, and escape from them of Itself. "This at first troubled me," he says, "for I feared lest the Sacred Host should fall to the ground; but It seemed to fly into her mouth. Several persons have told me that the like happened to them when giving her Holy Communion." (p. 145)

One more piece of testimony about Catherine's animated Host, from Francesco Malevolti, a witness in the process:

I often saw her communicate, and always in ecstasy; and I beheld when the priest was about to give her the Body of our Lord, before he had drawn more than a palm's length near her, the Sacred Host would depart out of his hands and like an arrow shoot into the mouth of the holy virgin. (p. 145)

One major difference from other types of psychokinesis described by parapsychologists is the enormous concentration of meaningfulness that the telekinetic Host is endowed with. Thurston puts it like this:

Certainly if telekinesis exists at all upon this earth—and levitation itself is sometimes reckoned as a particular development of it—it is difficult to imagine any conditions under which the power of spirit over matter is more likely to be displayed than in relation to those consecrated species which already in some way belong simultaneously to the two realms of soul and of sense. (pp. 149–150)

Stigmata and Tokens of Espousal—Chapters II and III have in common puzzling and truly striking dermal phenomena. The chapter on the stigmata is very long (pp. 44–129) and complicated, and we can only touch on a few points. To begin with, the stigmata—the seeming reproduction of the wounds of Christ's crucifixion—is a phenomenon with a history. When first reported of St. Francis it made an immense impact on contemporaries. In a letter to the Provincial of France, an eyewitness, Brother Elias, wrote: "I announce to you great joy, even a new miracle. From the beginning of ages there has not been heard so great a wonder . . ." (p. 44). Although Thurston is deeply interested in the stigmata, and says that fifty or sixty truly anomalous cases have been well-documented, many of them in the 19th and 20th centuries, he has misgivings about whether they can be explained by natural psychology—if not explained,

closely allied to *parapsychology*. He also wonders about the relationship of stigmata to sanctity.⁵ Could they be symptoms of hysteria?

The majority of experiencers of the stigmata have been women—even though the phenomenon began with a man in the 12th century and has returned with a vengeance with Padre Pio's marathon fifty-year performance as stigmatist.⁶ In Victorian times when hysteria was a fashionable concept, stigmatics tended to be hysterical. This old concept has been broken up into different components, and today we look for somatization or attention-seeking disorders.

For Myers hysteria was a "dissolutive" form of dissociation, which may apply to some pseudo mystics, for example, pretenders that the Sacred Host appears on their tongues. Authentic saints shun publicity, whether the attention of admirers or the ill will of opponents. The daily struggle is to gain control over what is judged to be the lower self, which would seem to be contrary to the spirit of hysteria, which revels in the descent. The saintly quest is to crush normal human nature; to cease reacting, to detach oneself from everything, and be open to the one great thing however one conceives it, often designated God.

There is however perhaps one feature of hysteria—profound affective capacity—that may come into play during the rare and very strange dynamics of stigmata. The heightened feeling-capacity is directed toward the universal archetype of suffering, represented in the figure of Christ. Given the all-consuming desire to unite with Christ, combined with the hysterical propensity to somatize, something like stigmata, which reproduce the wounds of Christ, seems like a possible course. However rare, the human sometimes rises to the passion of wanting to unite with the divine even if it costs the complete crucifixion of the human. This may sound slightly mad or dangerous or it may be read as an image being projected from some very deep region of the subliminal mind. One might be content to say that stigmata and other esoterica make a group of phenomena that in a broadly enticing way support some form of basic idealism, which I define as a philosophy anxious not to underrate the creative power of *ideas*.

In the early stages of his career, Padre Pio was accused of faking his stigmata, wearing perfume, and trysting with the ladies. Stories like this are amusing in Boccaccio's fictions, but the rumors about (the now) Saint Pio were refuted early on, although they still circulate on the Web and appear in books that don't like the Padre for one reason or another. Here, however, is a short list of some of the relevant facts concerning his stigmata. Essentially, they bled continuously for fifty years. Shortly before he died in 1968, the wounds gradually ceased bleeding and began to heal and disappear until the moment he died and the last scale fell away—

On September 22, 1968, while Padre Pio was celebrating his last Mass, two almost perfectly white scales fell from his hands. On the morning of the 23rd, while Dr. Sala and I were preparing his lifeless body, the last scale fell from his left hand.⁷

The wounds on his side and feet (after fifty years) had also disappeared and left no scar or any trace. "Every deep and lasting injury resulting in lesions of the tissues leaves an easily seen scar," we are reminded. In all the years of their unexplained existence, Pio's wounds were never infected, enflamed, or suppurated, and in fact were known to emanate, as covered in Thurston's book, anomalous and inexplicable fragrances. Nor are Pio's stigmata associated with hysteria, typically found in female stigmatics. The chapter by Cruchon, who was Pio's physician, puts to rest the absurd claim that the wounds were self-inflicted. In this instance, later research confirmed that Thurston was on the right track in his early assessment of the stigmata of Padre Pio, as being authentic, unexplained, and rare but perhaps not (according to Thurston's understanding) *miraculous* (pp. 100–101). Whatever the use of miraculous language in a community of believers, from the present standpoint, stigmata are important because they exhibit a high degree of mental influence over physiological processes. Stigmata are evidence for a theoretically important type of psychophysical process that is probably latent in all human beings.

A related anomalous skin behavior is behind what Thurston calls (in Chapter III) "tokens of espousal." Books on hagiography are full of stories of miraculous rings that appear on the fingers of god-intoxicated women. This is how Thurston puts it: "In nearly all such cases the outward manifestation is preceded by an ecstasy in which the soul thus favored believes herself to have gone through some form of mystic espousal with Christ. . . ." (p. 131). Many deeply religious women have espoused their souls to Christ, but few return with rings on their fingers, or other tangible tokens of their espousal. There is the intermediate case of St. Catherine of Siena, who received a ring of espousal visible *only to her*. There were no physical signs of the ring, but the experience points to a novel possibility: a capacity for *selective permanent hallucination*. By means of this capacity she convinced herself that she was indeed spiritually espoused to Christ, whom she is free to imagine in some form, perhaps mediated by a local artist whose work impressed her imagination.

In other cases, the hallucination begins to materialize. The dream becomes visible in one's own body through ringlike growths and colorations that appear on the skin of the ecstatic's fingers. Dr. Imbert-Gourbeyre studied the case of Marie-Julie Jahenny, a stigmatic who was espoused in a vision. In 1894, he described what he observed: "Marie-Julie's ring remains to the present day. I saw it again in October, 1891, still a ring made in the fleshy tissues, like a hoop of red coral which had sunk into the skin" (p. 133). So the vision of espousal

can prompt a permanent hallucination or lead to the manipulation of the shape of skin cells and the flow of blood in conformity with a ring-idea, imagined with special intensity by certain young women. All this seems to take place apart from any known genetic or normal physiological function. Perhaps we could say that in line with recent changes in understanding the plasticity of the brain and the pleiotropic nature of genes,⁸ our understanding of psychophysical relations is also being challenged. This entire discussion of the physical phenomena of mysticism and its empirical findings fly in the face of mainline assumptions about how mind and consciousness work.

Luminous Phenomena—One is tempted to stand this phenomenon side by side with levitation; the paranormal target once again is a basic physical reality: light. Light, the key to the discovery of the quantum domain, is also a fertile source of symbolic meanings, and figures in religious art in haloes, nimbuses, and aureoles. This is a short chapter packed with critical qualifications. Hagiography often speaks of supernatural luminosities that emanate from the bodies of spiritually favored persons,⁹ but Thurston does his usual thing and tries to sift out the evidence for truly unexplained luminosities, though not before reviewing a case of a "luminous woman" of Pirano in 1934. Her phenomena were filmed and physicians from the University of Padua studied her; the physician there had a naturalistic explanation in terms of the physiology of excessive fasting and the religious ideas she was fixated on. Thurston also notes that Prosper Lambertini thought there were good naturalistic explanations for many unusual luminous phenomena; however, both Lambertini (the future Pope Benedict XIV) and Thurston conclude there is a residuum of cases much more difficult to explain away.

A laybrother, Jerome da Silva, had to deliver a message to Father Francis Suarez, the great Spanish theologian. As he approached Suarez's room he called but received no answer. "As the curtain which shut off his working room was drawn," Jerome writes, "I saw through the space left between the curtain and the jambs of the door a very great brightness. I pushed aside the curtain and entered the inner apartment. Then I perceived that a blinding light was coming from the crucifix, so intense that it was like the reflection of the sun from glass windows, and I felt that I could not remain looking at it without being completely dazzled. This light streamed from the crucifix upon the face and breast of Father Suarez, and in the brightness I saw him in a kneeling position in front of the crucifix, his head uncovered, his hands joined and his body in the air lifted five palms above the floor on a level with the table on which the crucifix stood" (p. 166). Agitated by the sight of all this, Brother Jerome left the scene. When Father Suarez discovered he had been observed in his curious state, he exacted a written promise from Jerome to record what he saw in writing but keep it unknown until after his death. Jerome was forced to consult with his confessor,

Father de Morales, about what had happened, thus adding a second person in a joint promise to thus keep the secret of what he observed. Thurston comments: "As both the laybrother da Silva and Father de Morales were themselves held in deep veneration for their well-known holiness of life, it seems to me that this is a piece of evidence which cannot lightly be rejected" (p. 166). One can see how witnesses of such events, and those who believe the reports of them, might be swept up into powerful states of religious belief. Experiences such as da Silva's call attention to what seems a good explanation of the origin of certain core religious beliefs and religious worldviews. As we secure a more accurate picture of the true powers of human consciousness, it should enable us to gain an altogether new perspective on the origins of religious belief. The new hermeneutics would neither preserve intact nor destroy traditional religious beliefs; it would, I believe, lay the groundwork for some novel re-imaginings of the nature of "religion" and "spirituality." But on to the next set of physical phenomena.

Marvels of Heat and Fire—Chapter VI is called "Human Salamanders." A salamander is a newtlike amphibian of the Order Urodela, but the term also refers to a mythical lizard or elemental that lives in or can withstand the effect of fire. This chapter then veers us back to the world of elementals, and tells of people who demonstrate immunity to fire. This involves several things: immunity to the pain inflicted and the injury of human flesh normally accomplished by fire. Even highly combustible materials like clothing are caught up in this immunity.

The chapter begins with the story of St. Polycarp of Smyrna who was condemned to die at the stake in 155 A.D, but around whom the flames, when ignited, perversely formed a harmless circle, driving his executioner to dispatch the saint with a lance through his breast. The author provides more recent examples of saints who qualify as "human salamanders," but Thurston runs into a difficulty. It appears that immunity to fire is well-attested in cases of mediumship and Spiritualism, D. D. Home having performed the marvel before credible witnesses. In addition, there is very good testimony to fire-walking ceremonies that involve different faiths. Finally, Thurston reviews fascinating cases of biologically endowed immunity to fire, illustrated by a professional fire-eater named Richardson and a black blacksmith from Maryland who could hold fiery molten iron in hand and drink boiling water. How would the neo-Darwinians explain the blacksmith's mutant talent? Thurston confesses puzzlement; if one can have this capacity naturally (without any spiritual connection), and if people of other faiths obtain the same astonishing effect, we do not seem to be dealing with something that only Our Biblical Deity could produce as a favor to his saints. It seems rather to be a capacity of people in any culture, as long as certain psychological states and attitudes are in play. We should study this because we might learn more deeply how fear limits what we can do or become.

As indicated, immunity to fire extends beyond immediate effects on flesh. One's hair and clothing and other personal appurtenances also escape destruction. This suggests that something is happening to entire volumes of space, in which all the objects within are shielded from the process of combustion. I also want to mention the social dimension of these occurrences; the immunity can be imparted from one who has it to one who does not. Home was quite good at handing over immunity, and had to be, as Thurston points out, as he often handed burning coals to his upper-class English lady admirers; it would have ruined his career if he set one of them on fire. If gifted people can infuse their gifts into other people directly, it might be of use to learn how it's done; it could be the basis of some new principle that we might apply to the art of teaching. Finally, an eyewitness report by a Catholic Bishop: A fire ceremony is conducted by a Muslim with an Indian population, during which hundreds are encouraged or held back from the walk. At the end of the ceremony, the Muslim collapses, a paranormal group process extraordinaire.

Thurston's saints and mystics have a gift for escaping the effects of fire; they can also generate fire from within themselves. They generate, according to Father Thurston, *Incendium Amoris*, the Fire of Love. As certain mystical women, already noted, experienced espousal with Christ, producing hallucinatory or psychosomatic rings on their fingers, in this chapter we find accounts of individuals, men and women, who are so ablaze with mystical love for their Image of the Divine that their bodies become physically burned, enflamed, wracked, desiccated, boiled, and all-round fired up. These ardors are often triggered by actual images of art, as was the case with Joseph of Copertino who was regularly jolted into ecstatic rapture by the sight of a mere painting, the *Madonna of the Grotella*, which he first saw in a small church in Copertino. These men and women are more than metaphorically on fire with mystical love. For when doctors took Padre Pio's temperature, the mercury would expand to the limit and the thermometer would shatter. Filippo Neri's heart pounded with such fury during his flights of adoration that he broke his own ribcage, whose bulge became visible to his confrères, and was publicly dissected during his autopsy. Magdalina de Pazzi could be seen on a winter's night frantically ripping her clothing off, consumed by real fires of mystical rapture.

Thurston seems to relish giving us the details of these strange ravagings of the spirit, but fails to ask how all this may relate to human sexuality. This not being the place to discuss this question, I recommend two books, one by George Bataille that discusses the erotic mysticism of Teresa of Avila, and the other by Jeffrey Kripal, which studies the homoerotic dimensions of Ramakrishna's mystical life.¹⁰ One brief comment I cannot resist making: the *incendium amoris* is testimony to the extraordinary physical power of the imagination. There is no physical object of love there, at most a symbol, an idea, or a painted image; it

is the mental object—the mental process—that sets the body on fire and makes the blood boil, literally.

Suspension of Effects of Bodily Death—To sketch a typology of these charisms, we are thinking in terms of what piece of natural machinery has been stopped, diverted, or suspended. Four chapters are about phenomena that in different ways *delay, alter, or suspend the normal effects of bodily death*. One thinks of John Donne ending a famous sonnet with the apostrophe: "Death thou shalt die!" In each case, we observe some interference with events that normally supervene upon bodily death. They are called "The Odour of Sanctity," "Incorruption," "The Absence of Cadaveric Rigidity," and "Blood Prodigies."

The Odor of Sanctity—The chapter on "The Odour of Sanctity" begins with St. Polycarp, whom we met in the context of immunity to fire. Thurston writes "that already in the second century the idea was familiar throughout the Christian world that high virtue was in some cases miraculously associated with fragrance of body" (p. 223). In a well-authenticated letter, a witness to Polycarp's death wrote: "We perceived such a fragrant smell, as if it were the wafted odour of frankincense or some other precious spice" (p. 222). Since then much testimony on anomalous fragrance has been collected. Thurston associates it with death and tombs of saints but, based on his own examples, the living seem to produce unexplained fragrances as often as do the dead. Thurston is quick to note that the effect is found among spiritualists and mediums, for example, Stainton Moses, much admired by Frederic Myers. Thurston thinks the mediumistic effects minor by comparison with their saintly counterparts. The former involve an exaggeration or extension of actual scents of known sources, according to Thurston, whereas the odor of sanctity is typically of unknown origin and ineffable identity, with the effect being unambiguous and overwhelming.

As with all the charisms discussed in this book, they manifest in different ways and to different degrees. For example, the point of origin of Stainton Moses's fragrance could be traced to a particular moist spot on the top of his head (p. 225), and was associated with a pain he suffered, while Sister Maria della Croce's fragrance emanated from one of her fingers, following her mystic espousal to Jesus. The saintly odors, like the waxing and waning of stigmata, are more likely to manifest on holy days and during especially meaningful, that is, sacred times. Thus, after Communion, according to della Croce's biographer, Weber, an "indescribable sweetness . . . exuded not only from her body but also from her clothes long after she had ceased to wear them, from her straw mattress and from the objects in her room. It spread through the whole house and betrayed her comings and her goings and her every movement. . . . This phenomenon, which lasted for many years, was the more remarkable because naturally she could not endure any scent" (p. 229). Another variation to further

confound us is that these mysterious fragrances, powerfully evident to most percipients, were sometimes imperceptible to some. A detailed account of anomalous fragrance is discussed at length in Domenico Bernini's biography of Joseph of Copertino, where it is said that his cell was filled with unexplained fragrances years after his death, as well as were all manner of objects he had touched in life.

So what is going on here? Are the unearthly fragrances (as often dubbed) structured hallucinations involuntarily produced and perceived, or do they involve the materialization of physical particles that produce public olfactory impressions? The fact, repeatedly deposed by witnesses, that objects used or touched by the saints would continue to emanate odors, sometimes for years, speaks for a physical interpretation of the phenomenon. On the other hand, Padre Pio is said to have communicated his presence by projecting his fragrance to people across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. This suggests partial bilocation or olfactory apparition or some mental form of communication, but I suppose the atoms could be teleported across the ocean!

We can only speculate as to what is going on at (say) the quantum level of the olfactory universe. What seems clear: The odor of sanctity is a highly symbolic and expressive way to convey a message, a heart-wrenching meaning and *cri de coeur*. In its various guises, this phenomenon—as I read it—wants to communicate a very important, very dramatic message. The symbolism of fragrance and incorruption suggest a definite idea. Suppose these phenomena are part of a language, and suppose the speaker is Some Higher Mind trying to communicate with us. The big message seems to be about death: instead of the stench of putrefaction, we get the fragrance of unearthliness; instead of the conqueror worm, we are given an icon of eternal life. "You see," the incorrupt body of a saint seems to say, "look at me! I performed the great experiment—look at my incorrupt body! What you see is a symbol, an earnest of things to come, not yet resurrection, but enough to *feel* the next dimension of reality."

Christian mystics assume survival of death, so Thurston's book is not concerned with survival evidence. However, in suspending the effects of bodily death, the afterlife question is posed indirectly. Stopping the entropy, staving off the rot of death, is more than a symbol; it is acting out on earth a power that would dare to take the sting out of death as conceived by rational, sensate man. The meaning—the image of triumph—of these death-dodging and death-delaying displays is clear enough. Bergson once remarked that the moment consciousness stumbled on the idea of death it instinctively reaffirmed the idea of immortality, for it had to maintain the forward trajectory of the life "impetus."¹¹ The phenomena that Thurston describes seem like data ("good news") that point toward bodily resurrection; this is data different from psychical research, which is about the interior life's survival. No conflict here.

The evidence of psychical research and the evidence for supernormal bodies converge; they form a basis for an expanded vision of the possible range and life potential of a human being.¹² The incorrupt saints offer a demonstration, not of consciousness surviving death, but of an unknown force that can demonstrably suspend the natural course of bodily death. Incorruption is an earnest¹³ and sign of an unknown "resurrection" power.

Absence of — Thurston's chapter with the curious title "Absence of Cadaveric Rigidity" (or *rigor mortis*) continues with phenomena that actively and perversely deconstruct our most ingrained conception of bodily death. *Rigor mortis*, the iron rigidity that grips dead bodies, is checked, it is halted and kept at bay: And the moisture, and the suppleness, and the warmth of a living body are *retained*. Rebelliously and shockingly retained. Unnaturally and therefore it might appear supernaturally. It is as if these saintly figures were merely in a profound trance, or striking a pose, they looked poised for a great awakening. Undoubtedly uncanny, this is a phenomenon about as dramatic as can be, and as charged with the operatic heights of meaning. Absence of *rigor mortis* must be seen as an aspect of incorruption; if a dead body does not decompose, it should not surprise us if its limbs retain their suppleness. Thurston locates the earliest eyewitness report of cadaveric suppleness in 1260 (p. 272); a half-century later we have exact testimony of St. Francis's preternaturally limber cadaver. According to Brother Elias, he saw Francis lay dying, covered with the five wounds of Christ, bent over and unable to raise his head. His limbs

were rigid as are wont to be the limbs of a dead man. But after his death, his countenance was most beautiful, gleaming with a wondrous brightness and making glad them that saw it; and the limbs which before were rigid had been made exceeding supple, allowing them to be turned hither and thither according to his position like the limbs of a tender boy. (p. 271)

What certainly sounds odd here is that the corpse of the saint *re-acquired* the suppleness of limb it had lost in life. The strength lies in the numerous cases, more spectacular and more thoroughly witnessed even until present times. The cases cited by Thurston confront us with a medical anomaly that has rarely been discussed or even acknowledged to exist. I mean cases in which dead bodies (after death) *gain* in freshness, brightness, fragrance, suppleness, and general aliveness. Thurston reminds us that, as with levitation, it should be easy to detect the absence of *rigor mortis*. A child, he avers, could be a good witness as to whether a limb is loose or stiff, a neck supple or rigid.

On a hot July day in 1912, a nun of Southern Italy, a Sister Maria della Passione died and was laid out to be viewed by the public.

... the body remained throughout perfectly flexible, and although it was pulled about by the constant handling of those who stood close to it, to the astonish-

ment of all, it remained without a trace of corruption and without giving off the least unpleasant odor; on the contrary it was remarked that the face became more and more beautiful and the features more clear-cut. (p. 273)

The latter observation is much too subjective to be taken seriously, but some cases discussed by Thurston seem harder to dismiss as mere illusion or imagination. We are told, for example, of a Carmelite nun of Tours who died in 1848 that "her limbs, though they had been stiff and immovable during her illness, became after death, as supple and flexible as those of a child" and of a laybrother from Viterbo who died at Rome in 1750 of gangrenous necrosis. The description of the biographer is very puzzling:

Hardly had the corpse been laid out, when, as all could see for themselves, an incredibly surprising change took place in every part of the body. The blotches, the wounds, the unhealthy pallor and the other signs of the gangrene all disappeared at once; the flesh of the limbs became healthy, supple and white like that of a child; the knees unbent to their full extent, the hands and feet which were before contracted and knotted, straightened out and became pliable like those of a man in health. In fact, the body was completely transformed, and as all present perceived, it was not only changed in appearance, but also flexible and comely in a degree which excited general attention and astonishment. (p. 275)

There are yet more complex and richer cases discussed by Thurston, but let us proceed to our next phenomenon.

Blood Prodigies—Another chapter about dead people; to be sure, they are dead, but they do things that give the appearance of *being alive*. Thurston admits to not being at all sure how this phenomenon relates to mysticism, or whether it can be naturally explained, or what its spiritual significance may be; the last passage he quotes is one from a medical expert he hopes will put his doubts to rest (pp. 292–293). He felt driven to include a brief chapter because of the abundance of well-observed cases. When moved from one resting-place to another, or disinterred and medically examined, or surreptitiously attacked by relic hunters and had their toes, fingers, or whole limbs cut off, the often long-dead bodies of these mutilated saints have been observed to bleed—months or even years after death—warm, fresh, full-bodied crimson blood.

All in all, there is much toying here with the mechanics of bodily death. So we are bound to ask ourselves: What is one to make of these incorrupt, fragrant, warm, supple, bleeding, shiny-eyed, radiant *corpses*? If we allow ourselves to dwell on the effect of the overall image, it does seem as if our imagination of bodily death is being revised by images of eternal life triumphant over putrid death. There is no logical argument here; there is simply a visible manifestation of a power that presumes by its action a certain power to transcend death.

Chapter VII is about "Bodily Elongation." It also discusses stigmata and inedia, and continues playing devil's advocate against the author's beliefs, by

confronting the consequences of hypnosis being used to induce stigmata. About the observed phenomenon of the limbs of ecstasies becoming elongated, Thurston writes: "This is a prodigy which no devout client would be likely to invent in order to demonstrate the sanctity of the particular object of his veneration" (p. 193). The fact that mediums and hysterics were also known to display a knack for bodily elongation (as well as bodily shrinkage) led Thurston to doubt it should be thought of as anything supernatural. Thurston suspects that the physical phenomena may be preternatural or paranormal and worthy of wonder, but still an expression of the natural world and not a sign of divine intervention.

Thurston provides as usual a feast of highly particular, highly bizarre scenes in which hysterical ecstasies claiming to relive the crucifixion of Jesus display their bodies in wildly dramatic contortions in which limbs are elongated *and measured on the spot* and then shrunk back to their normal size. These are scenes from Lewis Carroll's "Wonderland," or scenes from the local madhouse, for, according to Thurston, the stigmatics are, however pious in their intentions, also hidebound in neuroticism.¹⁴

A revealing example is the case of a pious neurotic, Elizabeth, who had been in several *Kliniks* until she came under the care of Dr. Lechler. On Good Friday in 1932 she went to a movie that showed a scene of the crucifixion of Jesus in realistic detail. This disturbed her and when she went home felt pains in her hands and feet and called Dr. Lechler who hypnotized her, a procedure they sometimes found useful. The doctor suggested to the hypnotized woman that she was experiencing the wounds of Christ crucified; she responded to the suggestion, including a suggestion that her eyes bleed; the experiments were written up and published.

If Dr. Lechler could re-produce by mental suggestion the wounds of Christ in a pious neurotic, the whole phenomenon, however real and scientifically inexplicable, could not be classified as divinely wrought. So this chapter, while reviewing much provocative evidence of things possibly paranormal, contributes to the naturalization of the phenomena under discussion. Instead of making the case for the superior "stupendous" status of saintly phenomena, the very status of the phenomena *as saintly* seems in doubt.

Suspension of nutritional needs—If anything suggests a revolutionary break from the known order of biological nature, it is the phenomenon of living without eating, drinking, or eliminating. Thurston has three interrelated chapters on this topic of supernormal nutrition, XV ("The Mystic as Hunger-Striker"), XVI ("Living Without Eating"), and XVII ("Multiplication of Food"). As usual, Thurston presents concrete examples, weeding out the best cases for prolonged inedia, and considering counter-explanations.

Thurston is forced by the data to a qualified conclusion: There is good evidence that people other than Catholic saints are long-standing inediacs. For

example, there are cases of physically handicapped subjects who live without eating or drinking or eliminating; but, if it can be naturally achieved, it is not a miracle. Like Prosper Lambertini, Thurston does not grant supernatural significance to inedia as such while at the same time he gives detailed lists and accounts of highly functional saints and their super-prolonged fasts.

Related to transcendence of terrestrial nutrition, Thurston has a short chapter on "the multiplication of food"—one of the more famous miracles in the *New Testament*. The strange thing about the multiplication of food stories is that the miracle likes to hide; no one ever sees a loaf of bread or glass of wine materialize out of nothing. There is always a small supply of wine, a small basket with a few fish or a few pieces of bread; but somehow everybody ends up eating enough so that they can share with others and still have leftovers.

The ability to live without normal nutrition seems a latent, albeit rarely witnessed, human capacity. It can emerge in a subject in perfect health or in someone grossly impaired, physically or emotionally. Or it can be accomplished willfully, as part of a yogic discipline. Transcending the need for nutrition from the sublunary world, we may imagine combining the ecstatic power over gravity that produces levitation. A picture begins to emerge of a self-nourishing and self-propelling being, as if we were glimpsing the outline of a super-physical organism, pre-adapted to wider environments of being, a world of inner spaces with their own various geometries. It is almost as if the subliminal intelligence orchestrating our transcendent talents wants to help us imagine what it feels like to be ready to embark on some great adventure.

Chapters XIII and XIV contain material that cause Thurston to doubt if the boundaries between natural and supernatural can be sharply drawn. Inedia can occur with a paralyzed sick person, a mere abnormality; but it can also occur in an otherwise fully functional organism as that of Theresa Neumann. Is inedia proof of untapped human potential or of divine intervention? This was an important question for Thurston who was a priest in the Catholic Church. Inedia seems to occur in a variety of contexts, some we might call diseased, others religious, and others a mixture of spirituality and pathology. The data suggest something about latent resources for certain life functions, perhaps a kind of biological force that the physicist William Crookes was convinced he had discovered in his experiments with D. D. Home.¹⁵

Chapter XIII, which covers "The Case of Mollie Fancher," is long, and problematic for Thurston. After two crippling accidents, Mollie Fancher, born in 1848, acquired extraordinary paranormal powers. The problem for Thurston was that Mollie, highly intelligent and articulate, in no way qualified as a Christian believer; her remarkable capacities, comparable to charisms of great saints, could not be explained by Thurston's theology; once again the phenomena of the saints were turning up in outside contexts. This seemed to

cast doubt on the entire belief system he was using to assess the miraculous status of his phenomena. Mollie seems to have been able to live without eating for years, see through parts of her body other than her blind eyes, enjoy a wide range of clairvoyant awareness of her environment, and converse regularly with the ghosts of her deceased relatives. She did all these things in a private, discreet, and religiously neutral manner. At times during her career, alternate personalities, four of them in fact, emerged, took over, and displayed distinctive traits. Her extraordinary behaviors were observable, they were tested, and they were attested to: by select friends, by family, by several doctors, and by her chosen spiritual companions. She lived bedridden for thirty years in her aunt's house in Brooklyn, New York. The eyewitness testimonies are collected in a volume (1893), *Mollie Fancher, the Brooklyn Enigma*, by Judge Abram H. Dailey.

After Mollie Fancher, there is a followup chapter, "More Seeing Without Eyes": three more cases involving the transposition of senses. Mrs. Croad, an English contemporary of Mollie, after a bad spinal injury became totally blind, deaf, and speechless; cut off from the world around her, she lived with limited sensation and restricted mobility of limbs. In this behaviorally near-death state, Dr. Davey reports that Mrs. Croad was able to "see" through her fingertips; Davey concluded: "The various tests . . . were witnessed by Drs. Andrews and Elliot in my presence, with the effect of assuring us that she (Mrs. Croad) was and is able to perceive, through the aid only of touch, the various objects, both large and small, on any given card or photograph" (p. 328). Mrs. Croad, like Mollie, also acted as if she were in direct clairvoyant rapport with familiar excarnates. Mrs. Croad was not a Catholic saint, and neither were the two Italian girls discussed by Lombroso; nor were the many other victims of trauma who were left with unexplained supernormal cognitive and fasting powers. We seem to be discussing a natural phenomenon, which may appear both in pathological or deeply mystical contexts of human behavior.

Thurston concludes by underscoring the difficulty he found in trying to separate the "abnormal" from the "miraculous or supernatural." Using a less question-begging taxonomy, Myers distinguished "evolutive" and "dissolutive" types of phenomena. Some things bear fruit for the future; other sow seeds of decay or ruin. The contrast has no absolute sanction or meaning. There must be an infinity of ways events can be "evolutive" and "dissolutive" for each of us. Moreover, the way we understand *evolutive* and *dissolutive* is not at all clear or obvious. The most that we can say is that what one makes of an encounter with something shockingly transcendent is always in some sense a creative act. On Thurston's own weighing of evidences, it is hard to sharply separate phenomena of saints from phenomena of mediums and some hysterics. In all cases we are talking about experiences mediated by a fallible human consciousness.

Conclusions

Taking a tip from William James, we have looked at some of the more extreme psychophysical phenomena reported in Thurston's book—phenomena connected with mystical practice. As to Thurston's belief that the saintly marvels he describes are more "stupendous" than comparable phenomena of spiritualism and psychical research, a case could be made using levitation as a possible example. Also to their credit, the mystics introduce new forms of "miracle," such as stigmata, the telekinetic Host, "rings" of divine espousal, and some baffling antics on the *rigor mortis* front. On the other hand, Thurston argues that many of the phenomena he covers may just be paranormal or abnormal in a purely naturalistic sense and are not therefore signs of divine favor. Thurston provides good reasons to take a more catholic than strictly Catholic view of the miracles recorded in the annals of sainthood.

The Church takes a legalistic view of its various ratification processes, of deposing and assessing testimony, thus leaving for public study evidence for miracle claims in the course of centuries. I would think that if a tradition of deposing eyewitness testimony were part of all the world's systems of religious salvation, we would have a vast database of enormous interest to researchers curious about the paranormal origins of religion and the outer edges of human consciousness and capacity. One thing is at least clear: some form of ascetic self-mastery is valued in all the spiritual traditions. The extreme fasting found among Catholic mystics is also found among native North American Indians, and for the same reason, as a way to prepare for receiving grace, a gift of psychical power, or a Myers-like "subliminal uprush." Whatever the differences in conception, language, or mythology, we find technologies of transcendence based on ascetic self-mastery. The general aim of ascetic practice is to stop the mechanical, self-obscuring flow of routine sensori-motor life. In effect, this isolates and magnifies the power of consciousness by deflecting it from its routine service to the brain and making itself radically available to the subliminal self.

The Catholic ecstatic tradition is rich in wisdom lore and paranormal phenomena. It looks like saintly manifestors of these phenomena are acting out their belief-systems, transforming their beliefs into sensory signs and active self-manifestation. The ecstatic so identifies with the Christ figure that she reproduces the archetypal wounds in her own body, making her identity with the divine figure tangible and brutally self-evident. These gestures might be thought of as new forms of rhetorical *epideixis*. Or, along the same lines, the saint apes the creator God by multiplying food or defying the law of gravity or transcending the physiology of nutrition. All this may be seen as acting out the Biblical statement in the *Book of Genesis* that man is made in the image of God; in other words, by underscoring our likeness to the divine we learn to perform

divine acts. Piecing the different phenomena together, looking at them in terms of what they enable us to do, a picture begins to emerge of a possible (call it) hyper-human, an emergent new form of life; if you like, a theoretical image of a resurrected, evolved, transformed specimen of humanity. (An evolutionary idea long ago intuited by mystics and prophets.) The data, in short, seem to want us to believe that we are part of a great metaphysical drama of transformation and liberation, a real adventure ahead, both futuristic and evolutionary.

But this undoubtedly weird data of Father Thurston's might also be useful as a tool of interpretive power with regard to the past. The material covered in Thurston's book should interest academics curious about the origins of religion; for one thing, it's loaded with curious facts absolutely central to discussing the ontology (nasty word) of certain religious claims. The overwhelming trend of modern science and all the rest has been to deflate the ontological status of spirituality; to think of it as hand-waving, self-deception, a hang-over from the childhood of the race, or, thanks to Freud, inspired by neurotic wish-fulfilling. Obviously, this is not my approach. On the contrary, in light of the physical phenomena of mysticism, I feel rationally bound to affirm some broadly conceived transcendent factor at work in nature.

I find myself reflecting on something else about Thurston's data: a point that at least for me opens up new avenues of exploration. The particular historical shape these effects assume are bound by time (heightened in the 16th and 17th centuries), by place (Latin European), and by culture (Catholic). Some effects described are reported nowhere else; the type, range, and extent of paranormal effects, in this case, are tied to particular cultures, historical epochs, specific symbols, and belief-systems. This seems true, for example, of Baroque Europe, which produced so many extreme and interesting ecstasies (Joseph Copertino and Teresa Avila) and their mystical and physical phenomena. What was happening in the Baroque Catholic Reformation that contributed to the development of these singular results? It was a period of high anxiety, and the medieval psychic mold was breaking up. Much of this turbulence was reflected in Baroque art, and one line of inquiry might be the influence of baroque art on psychic phenomena, the role of images, the psychic power of divine figures floating, plunging, or ascending in recessed, fantastic spaces, along with Loyola's injunction to breathe extravagant sensory life into metaphysical abstractions, illustrated perhaps by Bernini's statue of Saint Teresa in ecstasy.

In the field of psychical research, much work has been done on psi-conductive personalities, and psi-conductive personal variables such as belief, lability, and spontaneity. Thurston's book suggests that we might explore psi-conductive epochs, psi-conductive cultures, art-styles, religions, diets, and indeed a whole range of variables that may retard or liberate the expression of higher orders of conscious experience.

Notes

- ¹ *Surprising Mystics*, Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955, and *Ghosts and Poltergeists*, Fort Collins, CO: Roman Catholic Books, 1953.
- ² See C. Flammarion, *Mysterious Psychic Forces*, Cambridge, MA: The University Press, 1907.
- ³ E. A. Peers, *The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila*, Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1960 (translation).
- ⁴ Pastrovicchi, A., *Saint Joseph of Copertino*, Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1980.
- ⁵ He notes that Prosper Lambertini virtually ignores the phenomenon in his major work on beatification and canonization.
- ⁶ Ruffin, B., *Padre Pio: The True Story*, Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1982.
- ⁷ Cruchon, G., "Padre Pio's stigmata," *Padre Pio of Pietrelcina: Spirituality Series I*, San Giovanni Rotondo, 1972, pp. 110–141.
- ⁸ See Fodor, J., & Piattelli-Palmarini, M., *What Darwin Got Wrong*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010, pp. 44–46.
- ⁹ See James, W., *Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York: The Modern Library:

There is one form of sensory automatism which possibly deserves special notice on account of its frequency. I refer to hallucinatory or pseudo-hallucinatory luminous phenomena, photisms . . . Saint Paul's blinding heavenly vision seems to have been a phenomenon of this sort; so does Constantine's cross in the sky. (p. 276)

- ¹⁰ Bataille, G., *Eroticism: Death & Sensuality*, City Lights Books: San Francisco, 1986; Kripal, J., *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- ¹¹ Bergson, H., *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, New York: Random House, 1932.
- ¹² Michael Murphy's *Future of the Body* (1992) contains a detailed discussion of all the phenomena in Thurston's book, and sees them as part of a vast story of the evolutionary future of the body.
- ¹³ See Patrick Sherry, *Spirit, Saints, & Immortality*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984. This book explores the connection between the charismatic phenomena of the saints and life after death, i.e. "immortality."
- ¹⁴ "I have not yet met with a single case of stigmatization in a subject who was previously free from neurotic symptoms" (p. 203).
- ¹⁵ For a useful examination of Home's physical mediumship, see Braude, S., *The Limits of Influence*, New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986, pp. 70–108.

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